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ABSTRACT

In 1992, the Council of European Community Member States adopted the Childcare Recommendation, describing the elements of effective childcare systems, to assist in the development of public policy to help parents reconcile work and family roles. This guide provides detailed suggestions for implementing these elements. Following an introduction summarizing the recommendation and the policy framework, chapter 1 of the guide describes the benefits of measures to help parents reconcile the demands and needs of family and professional life. Chapter 2 maintains that reconciliation needs may be addressed at a number of levels, including governments, workplaces, and individual child care services; suggests that national policies will be more effective if coordinated with other policy areas; and recommends that authorities use a three-stage approach to implement the recommendation. Chapter 3 concentrates on policy implementation and gives examples of good practice in four areas: (1) services providing care for children; (2) leave arrangements for employed parents; (3) environment, structure, and organization of work and the workplace; and (4) promoting and encouraging increased participation by men in child care. Chapter 4 discusses monitoring and evaluating policies and practices to determine if they meet the recommendations, and developing review procedures to indicate where further improvements are needed; this chapter also lists suggestions for evaluating childcare services, special leave, the workplace, and sharing of responsibilities. The guide's annexes include the full text of The Council Recommendation on Childcare; Commission policy on reconciliation-related law, structural funds and community initiatives; and a glossary of key concepts. (KB)

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A guide to good practice

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Work and childcare: implementing the Council recommendation on childcare

A guide to good practice

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Foreword

At a time of some uncertainty and much change in the labour market, it is vital that we use human resources - men and women equally - as efficiently and effectively as possible. This involves ensuring that there are no obstacles, either direct or indirect, to their full participation in the labour market. Without suitable measures, working people with families - especially women, who traditionally have been expected to assume all caring responsibilities - run the risk of inferior working conditions, poorer promotion prospects and the daily stress of trying to combine two essential roles without the flexibility which ensures their smooth management. This prevents them from making their proper contribution to economic and social life. So an effective labour market policy should include measures to assist parents in the reconciliation of their work and family roles, both equally important to society.

The **Childcare Recommendation** is one practical step taken by the Union to help parents in this task of reconciliation. Adopted by the Council of Ministers in 1992, it is a statement of the elements of an effective childcare system. This guide is designed to supplement the Recommendation by providing detailed suggestions for how it might be implemented.

It is no coincidence that the first chapter of the guide describes the benefits of measures to help reconcile the demands and needs of family and professional life. The Recommendation, and the guide, are about problem-solving, and they are above all positive. Although a staged approach may be needed, nothing in the guide is impossible or unrealistic. All the examples come from the real world of private enterprise and public administration, of working mothers and fathers, of creches and nurseries and family day care workers, and of children, whose well-being is, and must be, central to the whole issue.

The guide sets both general principles and more detailed suggestions for action. It is addressed to governments at every level, to the social partners, services providers and parents so that they can consider it in the context of their own particular circumstances. I hope that it will stimulate childcare initiatives throughout the Union.

Pádraig Flynn
Member of the European Commission
Responsible for Employment and Social Affairs

Introduction

About the Guide - Aims and Objectives

This guide has been produced to focus action on childcare by giving detailed suggestions for implementing a Council Recommendation on childcare approved by ministers from all 12 European Community Member States in March 1992. It defines the various actors that may be involved in the management of high quality childcare; it identifies the main areas of priority which need to be considered; and it provides examples of good practice from across the European Union. It is intended as a tool, to be used both seperately and in partnership, by governments at all levels, social partners, and practioners, to help them translate policy into effective practice.
The guide therefore follows the structure of the Recommendation, the full text of which is printed as Annex I.

Childcare - The Recommendation and the Policy Framework

The Recommendation calls for action to improve the provision of childcare services, for leave for employed parents of both sexes, for measures to make workplaces more supportive of parents, and for more equal sharing of family responsibilities between women and men. It is a non-binding instrument giving loose guidelines to be implemented by the Member States. The guide follows the structure of the Recommendation.

The Recommendation on Childcare may be seen in the context of ongoing recognition by the Commission of the importance of parents being able to reconcile both working and family life; as may be seen both in Community sponsored initiatives (see Annex II), and in various Commission policy documents which give priority to reconciliation.

The Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers[1], adopted in 1989, explicitly recognises the need to link equality, economic and social policies: *"measures should be developed enabling men and women to reconcile their occupational and family responsibilities"*.

The Commission's Third Action Programme on Equal Opportunities (1991-1995)[2] was intended to promote women's full participation in working life and to win better recognition of their contribution to the economic and social life of the Community. Under the Third Action Programme, the Commission has supported Community-wide initiatives to promote good-quality services and practices where there is a direct link with women's education, training or employment prospects. The Third Action Programme also committed the

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1 European Commission (1990) Brussels: office for Official Publications.

2 COM(90)449 final of 6/11/90 and Council Resolution of 21 May 1991 OJ C 142 of 31/5/91 p.1.

Commission to both the production of the Recommendation on childcare and the publication of this guide.

In 1993, the White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment identified the caring sector, including childcare, as an important source of new jobs. Very importantly, it added that it is necessary to enhance the perceived value and therefore encourage increased skills, in these sectors

Similiarly, the White Paper, "European social policy - a way forward for the Union"[3], published in July 1994, made "Reconciling employment and household/family life" one of the priorities for equal opportunities. It recognised that "there is now an urgent need, in the interests of society as a whole, for working life and family life to be more mutually reinforcing." The Commission undertook to assess how the Recommendation has been implemented, to establish better data on childcare and address the stereotyping that affects women and men's roles in society.

The Commission's Medium Term Social Action Programme (1995-97)[4] recognised the need to "*encourage the introduction of new, flexible models better suited to the changing needs of European society*". As part of this strategy, the Commission decided to pursue an agreement on Parental Leave with the Social Partners using the procedure provided for by the Social Protocol of the Treaty on European Union. Using this procedure, the Social Partners concluded a framework agreement on Parental Leave on 14th December 1995. At the same time they forward the agreement to the Commission, asking for it to be implemented by a Council decision on a proposal for the Commission. Pursuant to Article 4.2 of the Agreement on Social Policy, the Commission submitted to the Council, on 31 January 1996 a proposal for a Directive aiming at implementing the framework agreement in the European Union (except for the UK). The Directive was approved by the Council on 29 March 1996.

The Commission's repeated recognition of the importance of reconciliation has been reinforced by the response received from its partners. Contributions received from a variety of bodies during the consultations on the Green Paper on Social policy and the 4th Action Programme for Equal Opportunities (1996-2000)[5], all emphasised the need to address this issue as a priority.

Therefore, notwithstanding the actual measures which could be promoted under the 4th Action Programme's objective on Reconciling Work and Family Life, this guide should be seen as part of an ongoing process to encourage the development of effective policies throughout Europe.

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3 European Commission (1994) COM(94)333 of 27 July 1994 .Brussels: Office for Official Publications.

4 Commission Communication of 12 April 1995 - published in Social Europe 1/95. Office for Official Publications: Luxembourg.

5 European Commission (1995) Com(95)381 19th July 1995. Brussels: Office for Official publications and Council Decision of 22 Dec 1995 OJ L 335 of 30/12/95 p.37.

Chapter 1

Working and Caring:
Reconciling Work and Family Responsibilities

Reconciliation

The European Community and Commission often talk about the need for "reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities", in relation to both equal opportunities policy and family policy. Reconciliation of these two areas of activity is a necessary condition for promoting gender equality in the labour market and thereby a better use of human resources. The concept of reconciliation refers to harmonising, bringing together or making consistent different activities or interests so that they can co-exist without friction, stress or disadvantage. Because of the focus of this guide is on children, it does not cover other groups who may need care and who would benefit from initiatives to reconcile employment and family responsibilities, like elderly, ill or disabled people.

Other key concepts, of fundamental importance when considering the relationship between employment, caring for children and equality of opportunity between women and men, are defined in the glossary which forms Annex III.

Reconciliation : Who Benefits ?

Reconciliation is important for many reasons. It is not an end in itself. It is a necessary condition for achieving a number of important economic and social objectives. It has an important role to play in promoting:

* gender equality;

* the well-being of children, parents, families, local communities and society;

* improved economic performance.

Children differ by gender and age. There are ethnic and linguistic differences; most European countries have significant minority ethnic groups and many have significant linguistic minorities. Many children also have special needs because of disability or chronic illness or because they live in emotionally stressful situations.

Some of these variations also apply to mothers and other carers. Numbers and ages of children vary. An increasing proportion of women are lone mothers, at least for a period of time, as are a small number of men[6]. Employment circumstances vary: many women work part-time or shifts. Many employed women with children (about a quarter) are not permanent employees: they are family workers, self-employed or have short-term contracts[7]. The size and nature of employment establishments will also differ.

Successful reconciliation policies will recognise, value and respond to this diversity of children and their carers. Reconciliation policies therefore need to be in the interests of families, society, economics, employees and employers. Annex IV gives a framework for Reconciliation, showing the groups of people who should benefit from reconciliation and the objectives which an effective reconciliation policy should achieve for these people.

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6 Jo Roll (1992) **Lone Parents in the European Community**, Brussels: European Commission.

7 EC Network on Childcare and other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities for Men and Women (1993) **Mothers, Fathers and Employment 1985-1991,** Brussels: European Commission.

Chapter 2

What needs to be done? : Policies and good practice

Effective and comprehensive reconciliation needs may be addressed by authorities at a number of levels:

* European Union;

* national;

* regional;

* local;

* Social Partners;

* individual workplaces; and

* individual childcare services.

Within this framework, national governments (or, in some cases, regional governments) will have a leading role to play. It would be especially helpful to define an overall, national (or regional) policy and programme on reconciliation, to provide a context within which all other partners can develop their contribution. The respective responsibilities of all the partners in implementing the policy should be clearly defined and understood, and *"a framework for promoting the development of close partnership between governments, local authorities, organisations and social partners"* [**European Parliament Opinion**[8]] could be established. The 'lead' partner (whether national or regional government) could also be responsible for monitoring implementation, evaluating the effectiveness of programmes and reviewing overall policy.

In addition, the national policy on reconciliation will be more effective if it does not exist in isolation. It is likely to be helpful to relate it explicitly to and coordinate it with other policy areas, concerning for example:

* gender equality;

* childhood;

* families;

* employment and training.

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[8] European Parliament Opinion C326/16 on Commission proposal for Recommendation on Childcare OJ 31 Dec 1991.

The Council Recommendation on Childcare emphasises that *"reconciliation of occupational, family and upbringing responsibilities arising from the care of children has to be viewed in a wide perspective"* and that *"an overall policy (is required) aimed at enabling such reconciliation to occur"*.

To achieve this more coherent and comprehensive approach and to improve the effective implementation of the Recommendation, it is recommended that authorities at all levels consider adopting the three stages outlined below. All are likely to need their own reconciliation policies, programmes and systems for monitoring, evaluation and review.

Stage 1 - Policy formulation

It is recommended that policy on the reconciliation of employment and caring for children should

* express commitment;
* specify objectives for each group affected;
* identify criteria for these objectives;
* define priorities.

Stage 2 - Programme formulation

A programme to implement the policy might be drawn up for a specified period. This, within the context of the reconciliation policy, might:

* set objectives (qualitative and quantitative);
* select measures to be taken to achieve the objectives;
  set a timetable;
* stipulate who has responsibility for which measures;
* ensure effective coordination between these responsible parties;
* define the resources to be applied to implementing these measures.

Stage 3 - Monitoring, evaluation and review

It is helpful if the implementation process is accompanied by:

* regular monitoring;
* evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme, and in the light of this
* policy review at regular intervals;
* formulation of new programmes, as appropriate.

All three stages will work best if they are based on detailed, current and relevant information about employment, gender equality, the care of children and family life - and the relationship between these areas.

Chapter 3

How can it be done?

Programmes to implement reconciliation policies will have a better chance of success if they include a wide range of measures. individual measures are necessary, but will be more effective as part of a wider programme. This Guide follows the Recommendation in concentrating on measures to be taken in four particularly important areas:

* Services providing care for children (Article 3);

* Leave arrangements for employed parents (Article 4);

* The environment, structure and organisation of work and the workplace (Article 5);

* Promoting and encouraging increased participation by men in the care of children (Article 6).

None of the four areas upon which the Recommendation and this guide concentrate can be considered in isolation. They are all necessary parts of an effective reconciliation programme, and measures in one area will have consequences for measures in the other areas. For example, the development of leave arrangements for employed parents may influence the need for services, especially for very young children. Services, leave, and the workplace all affect men's participation in the care of children.

(N.B. Programmes may need to include measures in other areas not covered in the Childcare Recommendation, for example: social security, taxation, transport, urban planning etc. These fall, however, outside the scope of this guide.)

SERVICES PROVIDING CARE FOR CHILDREN

An effective reconciliation policy will ensure safe and secure care for all children whose parents are in or seeking employment, education or training. For some children, this care can be provided by parents themselves (for example, working shifts so that one parent can always be at home) or by 'informal' carers, such as relatives or neighbours. In many cases, however, these solutions will not be available or will not be satisfactory: then, good quality services, to which all parents have equal access, are needed.

Children can receive care in a wide range of services. Most people would recognise some of these 'childcare services': for example, nurseries, family day care, babysitters and nannies, school-age childcare centres. But many children receive care in other types of services, whose contribution is often not fully recognised: in particular, nursery schools and primary schools. The term 'childcare services' can be a problem because it may lead people to overlook the important contribution of schools to providing care.

In order to be effective, the development of services needs to take account of:

* the full range of objectives of a reconciliation policy: for example, as Annex IV indicates, objectives for children may go well beyond ensuring safe and secure care.

* the possibility of parents moving in and out of employment, either voluntarily or involuntarily.

* children with parents who are not in or seeking employment, training or education.

Whatever model of service provision it is decided to follow, a number of criteria need to be taken into account. Service providers should consider whether:

* An adequate supply of services is available, to ensure provision for all children whose parents need it. In many cases, this will take some time to achieve. But progress is more likely to be made if countries or regions, within the context of the objectives and priorities defined in a reconciliation policy, set targets for specific time periods and ensure *"steady annual improvements in the availability of provision"* **[European Parliament Opinion]** to achieve these targets.

* Services are evenly distributed to ensure *"they are available in all areas and regions...(and) both in urban areas and rural areas"* **[Recommendation, Article 3]**. The unequal distribution of services that occurs in most countries, and which especially disadvantages rural areas, needs special attention.

* Services are *"offered at prices affordable to parents"* **[Recommendation, Article 3]**. This means that prices will need to take account of parents' ability to pay; and this will depend on a variety of factors, in particular family income and family size. Consistency in pricing across different types of service is desirable (see discussion of coherence below). More generally, it could be advisable for the cost of services to parents to be determined in the context of broader policy on the costs of bringing up children and the sharing of these costs between parents and others: the cost of services is just one part of these wider costs of child-rearing.

* The hours offered by services are flexible and *"correspond to working hours"* **European Parliament Opinion]**. This may mean that some services for an area are open 24 hours a day, offering care in the evening and at night; at the other extreme, parents should ideally be able to use services for relatively short periods of time. The objective should be to ensure, as far as possible, that parents can choose the hours that best meet their needs and those of their children. In the case of children attending school, attention needs to be paid to the availability of services outside regular school hours and terms, and to ensuring safe and reliable transfer between school and other services.

* *"The needs of parents and children are taken into account when access to services is determined"* **[Recommendation, Article 3]**. Access to services should be based on the need of parents and children for the services, rather than on ability to pay.

* Services *"ensure access to children with special needs, children from ethnic minority groups and/or with linguistic needs and to children in lone parent families and recognise, value and be responsive to those needs"* **[European Parliament Opinion]**. This requires services that welcome and respond positively and appropriately to diversity.

EXAMPLE - Care for Special Needs

The Maison Dagobert, a halte-garderie in the 12th arrondissement in Paris, opened its doors in 1992. The centre welcomes about 20 children, a third of whom are physically or mentally disabled. There is a natural sharing between the disabled and non-disabled children, and staff feel that through this sharing "the children grow and progress individually and collectively". Support for the parents of disabled children is an important aspect of the centre, although it does not provide medical care. Attendance schedules are very flexible to respond to the needs of children receiving such care.

* Services *"combine safe and secure care with a broad pedagogical or educational approach"* **[Recommendation, Article 3]**. *"Care and education (should be seen) as joint functions of any provision"* **[ECOSOC opinion**[9]**]**. This means that services of whatever kind (including schools) ensure safe and secure physical and emotional care for children. It also means that all services should be actively concerned with fostering children's development and opportunities for learning. Services may vary but it would clearly be helpful to develop a programme with the involvement of parents and workers which defines their pedagogical and other objectives.

* Services work closely with parents. This enables services *"to be responsive to parental needs and particular local circumstances"* **[Recommendation, Article 3]**, and be more effective in their work with children.

* In addition to being locally based, services *"work closely with (their) local communities"* **(Recommendation, Article 3)**, enabling children to take part in local facilities, activities and events, and providing opportunities for members of the local community to visit the service. It would also help to give effect to the Recommendation if centre-based services could pursue an active policy of supporting, collaborating with and sharing facilities with individual carers in their neighbourhood (family day carers, relatives etc.), as well as community and self-help groups.

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[9] Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee C40/17 February 1992; Brussels, Office of Official Publications.

EXAMPLE - Services working with Local Communities

In a small village in the south of Portugal, a kindergarten is making a real effort to reflect local activities. The children in Sousel, Alentejo, visit the olive groves where many of their mothers pick olives, and later go to see the olive oil being prepared. They print their own school journal which is distributed in the village, make their own cheese and are involved in all the local festivals and agricultural and traditional events.

* A diversity of services is available to all parents, *"as part of a strategy to increase choice and meet the different preferences, needs and circumstances of children and their parents"* **[Recommendation, Article 3]**. There are a number of dimensions of diversity, including management (public authority, private organisation, parent cooperative etc) and type of service. Especially for children under three and for out-of-school care there should be the option of choosing between centre-based services and services provided by individual carers such as family day care. Real choice, however, will always depend not only on having a range of options, but ensuring that all options are affordable, are of comparable quality and accessible to all parents.

Service providers should also ensure that there is a *"coherence between different services"* **[Recommendation, Article 3]**. 'Coherence' does not mean uniformity: it is compatible with great diversity, for example in type of service and type of provider. It does mean removing unjustifiable and harmful inconsistencies and inequalities between different types of service. Coherence is particularly important in four areas:

* services should be equally available for all age groups (at present, services are more widely available for children over three);

* services should be concerned with all aspects of children's needs (care, social relationships, learning and other needs);

* workers in all services should have appropriate training, pay and employment conditions (at present, there are great disparities and many workers with children under three, in particular, have poor and inappropriate training, pay and conditions); and

* there should be consistency in costs to parents across different types of services.

Achieving coherence means, in particular, addressing the current inconsistency in many countries between services for children under three (in nurseries, family day care) and over three (in schools and kindergartens), and between services that are the responsibility of health or welfare authorities and education authorities.

These requirements are more likely to be met if certain conditions are present:

* *"A comprehensive and coherent national policy for service provision...to ensure coherence of services and regional equality"* **[ECOSOC opinion]**. Unless a decision is made to develop services for children with employed parents in isolation from services for other

children, a national policy needs to cover services providing care and education for all children.

* One department, at national/regional/local levels, with responsibility for all monitoring and/or coordination of all services providing care and education for children; or in the absence of this, an effective system of coordination between departments that enables the effective implementation of a coherent national policy.

* The employment of adequate numbers of workers to ensure that the pedagogical, care and other objectives of services can be achieved at all times and for all children. The number of staff required will depend on: the hours of opening of the service; standard working hours and holiday entitlements; within these standard working hours, the amount of time allocated to training, preparation, contact with parents and other activities not involving direct work with children; and the requirements of the children attending a particular service.

* Training (both initial and continuous) of workers which is *"appropriate to the importance and social and educative value of their work"* [**Recommendation, Article 3**]. The objective should be a level of initial training of at least three years, of a standard comparable of that of school teachers. Access to this training should be open to students with good potential, though who may not have received training in this field previously. Training should be available on a modular basis, to enable workers to progress as far and as fast as they choose. Continuous training is essential, with resources made available to ensure that all workers can participate regularly.

* *"Due recognition (should be) given to persons engaged in childcare services as regards the way in which they work and the social value of their work"* [**Recommendation, Article 5**]. Pay and conditions for workers with the basic initial training should be equivalent to that of workers with similar levels of training and responsibility. Staff are the most important factor in establishing good quality services; adequate numbers, and appropriate training and employment conditions, will enhance the performance of workers, increase job satisfaction and reduce turnover and absenteeism.

* There should be diversity among workers which reflects the diversity of the community in which they work, in particular with respect to gender, age, ethnicity and language.

* Safe and appropriate physical environments for services. Sufficient space and adequate facilities to ensure hygiene and safety are important. But it is equally important that the physical environment (including indoor and outdoor space and equipment) supports and promotes the full range of pedagogical and other objectives of the service. It should also provide a good working environment for the staff.

* Regular evaluation of the performance of individual services and service systems (that is, the network of services providing for a particular community). Evaluation needs to be related to the objectives of the service and service system. The definition of these objectives, and the evaluation of services, should actively involve parents and staff. Evaluation needs to be linked with measures to enable services to improve their performance, so that evaluation is a constructive and enabling exercise.

* An infrastructure for planning, monitoring, review, support, training (initial and continuous), research and service development.

* Adequate financing, both for services themselves and for the infrastructure to support and develop services.

These conditions are, in turn, most likely to occur where there is:

* a high and sustained level of public and political awareness of the needs of children, parents and families;

* recognition of the social and economic importance of meeting these needs;

* an understanding of the issues involved in doing so adequately;

* a society in which open discussion, analysis, experimentation and innovation about philosophy, objectives, methods and practice in services are encouraged and supported.

EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

The situation in Denmark[10]

Denmark has an extensive system of services for young children, based on sustained public support and a social commitment to the needs of children and parents. The system has been built up in only 30 years. Legislation in 1964 established that there was a public responsibility to support services available to all children and not just children from low income families. Development of publicly-supported services was stimulated by increasing numbers of mothers in the labour market; in the mid-1960s, two-thirds of women with children under seven were housewives, today it is only eleven per cent.

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[10] For further information see: Jytte Jensen (1993) 'Public Childcare in an Equality Perspective' in Carlson, S. (ed) The equality dilemma. Copenhagen: Danish Equal Status Council., and Jytte Jensen (1993) 'Age-integrated Centers in Denmark', in EC Childcare Network 1992 Annual Report. A video about services in Denmark and Northern Italy, 'Can you feel a colour?', is available for sale - contact the Equal Opportunities Unit in DGV of the European Commission for information on how to obtain it in English, Danish, Italian, Spanish or Dutch.

Sustained development has produced a high level of affordable, good quality services. Some children use private services that are not publicly funded and there are waiting lists for publicly-funded services (30,000 children aged 3-6 years at the end of 1992, mostly under three years), partly due to a rising birth rate. But most parents who want to are able to send their children to publicly-funded services. In 1992, these services provided for 49% of children under three, 75% of 3-6 year olds plus 46% of seven to ten year olds going to services providing out-of school care (in addition, nearly all six years olds and some five year olds attend nursery classes in school). This adds up to nearly 340,000 children aged 0-9. In October 1993 the government made a commitment to providing a place in a publicity-funded childcare service for every child of 1-5 years by 1996.

About 60% of publicly-funded services are provided directly by local authorities, but many are run by private non-profit organisations. Services for children under school age come in variety of forms, including day nurseries for children aged 0-3, kindergartens for children aged 3-6, age integrated centres for children from 0-6 or even older, and family day care provided in organised schemes with salaried carers. A recent development is 'forest kindergartens' situated in woodlands enabling children to spend much of their time in the countryside.

Most services offer flexibility in hours of attendance, giving parents the opportunity to use services for exactly the number of hours they need. An increasing number of communes provide services with special opening hours (for example, opening early, closing late, being available on Saturdays). There is pressure from some employers for services to be available in the evening and overnight; this provokes strong debate, but the first '24-hour' centre opened in 1993.

Alongside this diversity and flexibility, the system for children below the compulsory school age of seven is coherent in a number of important ways. All services are the responsibility of one department, nationally and locally -social affairs. All have a dual function: they provide safe and secure care and they have a clear and strong pedagogical role. Hours of opening are similar in services for children under and over three. Workers in services have the same level of training, pay and conditions irrespective of the age of children they work with. For the publicly-run services, there is a common funding system: most of the cost of services is met from public funds, with parents making a contribution (which varies between communes, depending on the level of funding from the commune, but is never more than 30% of running costs).

About half of all workers in centres are trained; many untrained workers go on to take training. The level of initial training is high, involving a three-and-a-half year, post-18 course. Training and pay is close to that of teachers, although still lower.

In recent years there has been a strong emphasis on building links between services, parents and local communities. A new law, passed in 1993, requires all services managed by communes to establish a committee, most of whose members must be parents. These committees participate in decisions concerning staffing, pedagogy and budgets.

Leave arrangements for Employed Parents

Leave arrangements have an important contribution to make to achieving many of the objectives defined for a reconciliation policy. There are four types of leave that are of particular relevance and importance to the reconciliation of employment and caring for children:

1. Maternity Leave

Maternity leave is for the protection of the mother and unborn child in the last weeks of pregnancy and during childbirth, to allow for the full recovery of the mother after childbirth and to accommodate breast-feeding in early infancy. It can only be taken by mothers and is essentially a measure to protect and promote the well-being of mother and infant.

2. Paternity Leave

Paternity leave is to enable fathers to be present at the birth of their child, to spend time with their new baby in order to promote the relationship and to develop caring skills, and to make an additional contribution to family responsibilities (for example, caring for older children, doing housework) immediately after childbirth.

3. Parental Leave

Parental leave is for mothers and fathers. It is normally available after maternity leave. Its main purpose is to enable an employed parent to spend more time at home, caring for his or her young child. Amongst other objectives, parental leave is particularly important because it increases parental choice in combining employment and family responsibilities. For this and other reasons, parental leave should be equally available to both parents.

4. Leave for Family Reasons

Leave for family reasons is for 'pressing family reasons' which require personal attendance, for example the illness of a child, the illness of a partner or someone else who normally cares for a child during working hours, or to accompany a child to a medical appointment. It could also be extended to enable employed parents to take time off work to visit a service where their children are cared for, to promote closer relationships between parents and the service their child attends. Finally, this type of leave could be applied to workers with other types of caring responsibility, for example for a disabled or sick elderly relative. (People who care for adult/elderly dependants have similar but not identical needs to those caring for children and the issue needs to be considered in that context.) Like parental leave, leave for family reasons should be equally available to both women and men.

Reconciliation is only likely to be achieved if all four types of leave are available to all workers, either through legislation or through comprehensive collective agreements. It is only in this way that parental leave and leave for family reasons can be equally available to mothers and fathers. A company may, for example, give members of its workforce leave to care for a young child, but this can only be equally available to both parents if both happen to work for the same company. Workplace measures, discussed in the next section, have an important part to play, complementing statutory leave entitlements. They can supplement them, by giving additional periods of leave or enhanced payments; they can introduce other types of leave (for example, career breaks, sabbaticals); and they can encourage employees to take leave, support leave-takers on re-entry to the workplace and ensure that taking leave does not damage employment opportunities and career development.

If they are to be effective, these four types of leave need to meet a number of conditions. These conditions are inter-dependent; all need to be present if leave arrangements are to make their full and important contribution to achieving the objectives of a reconciliation policy.

* Leave periods should be of an appropriate length, in relation to the purpose of the leave. This means, for example, that basic maternity leave should be long enough to ensure protection for the mother's health before and after birth and to enable her to breast-feed her child. Paternity leave should give a father enough time to be with his new baby and to make an additional contribution to family responsibilities immediately after childbirth. Leave for family reasons should be sufficient to cover the 'pressing' needs of the 'average' family, for example as a result of the illness of a partner, a child or her/his carer, attendance at medical appointments and at nurseries, schools or other services which the child attends.

Specifying the appropriate length for these three types of leave is a complex process. It requires information (for example, about illness rates among children), expert opinion (for example, concerning the period needed after childbirth) and research (for example, into the effect and use of paternity leave). The appropriate length of parental leave is even more difficult to determine. If the period of leave is too short, it is less likely to be taken by men, since, immediately following the birth, many parents choose for their newborns to be cared for by the mother. On the other hand, long periods of leave may work against the promotion of equality of opportunity in employment; they can lead to women's withdrawal from the labour market to the detriment of their long-term employment and earnings prospects.

* For parents taking leave, consideration should be given to some level of *"compensation for lost earnings"* [**Parliament opinion**]. The question of compensation is important for a number of reasons. It provides *"social recognition of childcare"* [**ibid.**] and of the value and cost of caring. Without compensation, parents taking leave, and their children, may be heavily penalised financially; lack of any compensation will be a particular disincentive to parents from low income families - especially lone parents. Some level of compensation for lost earnings is also important if increased participation by men in caring for children, through the use of leave, is to be encouraged.

* There should be *"some flexibility as to how leave may be taken"* [**Recommendation, Article 4**]. Three types of flexibility are important. First, parents will benefit from the right to take leave on a full-time or part-time basis or a combination of both. Second, with respect to parental leave, it is helpful if parents have some choice about when they take it, although they

may be required to take it within a given period (for example, between the end of maternity leave and compulsory school age). Finally, and again mainly relating to parental leave, it is desirable that parents are given the opportunity to take it in turns to be on leave; for example, a mother might take four months leave, followed by the father taking four months, then the mother taking a further two months or vice versa.

This flexibility would enable parental leave to be used how and when parents choose and according to the needs and circumstances of themselves, their children and their families. As the length of paid leave is extended, and when it is provided in this flexible way, parents may choose to use part of their leave entitlement to work reduced hours at certain periods of parenthood. Or they may 'save' part of their leave to use when their children are rather older, for example when children start at school or kindergarten.

In existing schemes, it is normally not possible for both parents to take parental leave at the same time. Some flexibility however could be allowed, to make it possible for both parents to take part of their leave period together if they so need.

* It is desirable that leave arrangements should take account of special circumstances. For example, a mother having a multiple birth or complications at birth may need extra maternity leave. Alternatively, if a newborn child is hospitalised for a prolonged period, a mother may prefer to interrupt her maternity leave, resuming it when her baby returns home. Parents with a child that is disabled or chronically sick may require a longer period of parental leave or leave for family reasons, while allowance may need to be made for prolonged, but not chronic, periods of illness or medical treatment.

* Entitlement to parental leave and leave for family reasons may be given to families; in families with two parents living together, parents decide how to divide this family entitlement between them. Alternatively, entitlement may be given to individual parents, so that each parent has their own leave entitlement. Individual entitlement to leave is more consistent with the principle of sharing family responsibilities, with fathers and mothers having equal responsibilities for caring for children. The entitlement of leave appropriate for lone parents should also be considered.

The principle of equal caring responsibilities can be further emphasised, when leave entitlements are given on an individual basis, by blocking the transfer of unused leave entitlements from one parent to another. For example, a father who does not take his entitlement to parental leave, would not be permitted to transfer his unused entitlement to his partner. On the other hand, in present circumstances, non-transferability would lead to many families losing part of the leave period as a result of fathers being unable or unwilling to use all of their leave.

It is helpful if there is some degree of compromise between non-transferability and complete flexibility on transfer of leave entitlements. Where leave is an individual entitlement, part of the entitlement could be transferable, while the remainder is not. In this way, a threshold point might be fixed, beyond which any extension of the period of leave should be on a non-transferable basis. In cases where leave is a family entitlement, the same effect could be achieved by specifying that part of the leave can only be taken if both parents use some period of leave.

EXAMPLES

Although leave arrangements in the European Union[11] have developed considerably in recent years, most are still very limited; there are few examples of comprehensive good practice. The most developed policies are in Sweden. Outside the Union, the example of Norway is also useful.

Sweden

Sweden's system of parental leave has evolved over a period of 20 years. Swedish parents are entitled to 15 months' paid leave , with the first 12 months covered by a benefit equivalent to 90% of earnings and the remaining three months covered by a low, flat-rate benefit; the leave period is extended for multiple births. Leave is not only paid but also very flexible. It can be taken in one continuous block of time or several shorter blocks, at any time until a child reaches eight. It can be taken full-time or part-time, with the period of leave extended if taken on a half-time or quarter-time basis; parents can switch from full-time to part-time leave and vice versa. Leave can also be shared out between mothers and fathers as they choose. Finally, flexibility is possible in how parents use their benefit payments; for example, they can take five days' benefit for every seven days of leave so spreading out the period of paid leave by taking a reduced payment over a longer time and using part of the 18 months of unpaid leave to which each parent is entitled.

In addition to parental leave, Swedish fathers are entitled to two weeks' paternity leave paid at 90% of earnings. Swedish parents are entitled to 120 days of leave per year per child under 12 if the child or her normal carer is ill (in fact, in 1990 leave was claimed for 56% of eligible children, for an average of eight days per child); the first 14 days is paid at 80% of earnings, after which benefit increases to 90% of earnings. Finally, two days of leave paid at 90% of earnings is available per family for each child aged 4-12, in order for parents to visit the child's school or day care centre.

There is a strong public commitment to encouraging fathers to play a greater part in the care of their children. This is reflected in a variety of publicity and education campaigns, while many of the conditions of the leave arrangements (for example, high levels of payment) support use by fathers. Nearly all fathers take paternity leave, half now take some period of parental leave and fathers account for just over a third of all days of leave taken because of a child or carer's illness.

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11 A longer discussion on leave arrangements, with figures for 16 countries, is contained in EC Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities for Men and Women **(1994) Leave arrangements for workers with children**. Brussels: Commission of the European Communities.

Norway

Parental leave has also developed over recent years in Norway. The period of leave has been extended to 52 weeks paid at 80% of earnings or 42 weeks paid at 100% of earnings (parents choose between these options). At least nine weeks must be taken by the mother, before and after birth, and four weeks is exclusive to the father; if he does not use his entitlement, the period of leave is lost. The remainder of the leave period can be divided between the parents as they choose.

As from July 1994, parental leave will become more flexible, with the introduction of a "time account" scheme. If parents choose to take 52 weeks' leave at 80% of earnings, then 39 weeks can be used flexibly as part of this scheme; if they choose 42 weeks at 100% of earnings, 29 weeks can be taken flexibly. The parents can use the "time account" period in a wide variety of ways, combining full-time and part-time leave, with a wide variety of part-time options; altogether, the Norwegian Government estimates there are over 100 options from which parents can choose. To give an example, parents opting for 52 weeks' leave at 80% of earnings could take 26 weeks of full-time leave. They could then use the remaining 26 weeks in the "time account", choosing from a wide variety of part-time options including (a) quarter-time leave lasting two years, (b) 40% leave over a year and 13 weeks or (c) half-time leave lasting a full year.

In addition, each parent with a child under 10 is entitled to 10 days' leave, paid at 100% of earnings, if the child is ill; single parents are entitled to 20 days.

THE ROLE OF THE WORKPLACE

The Policy Framework

Providing a work environment which, to quote the Recommendation, takes into account *"the needs of all working parents with responsibility for the care and upbringing of children"* brings benefits to employers. They have been listed in Annex IV of this guide (Reconciliation : who benefits?). The present section describes some of the methods which can be used to achieve such an environment. But this is not a purely administrative issue. Like any other corporate system, a reconciliation policy depends for its success on strong support from senior management and an acceptance that employees have a life outside the workplace which places demands on them and which they have to relate to their working lives. A company and personnel philosophy which underlines the importance and legitimacy of family needs is necessary if working practices are to be supportive of those needs. This philosophy can be demonstrated by, for example:

* a wide and flexible range of employment options offered to all employees;

* a working culture which takes into account the rhythms of family and social life, and which therefore, for example, avoids as far as possible evening and weekend work;

* Codes of Practice or other clear statements of policy

* full employment rights, career and training opportunities and status awarded to employees who take advantage of reconciliation practices on the same basis as those who do not need to use these practices;

* training for managers and supervisors in reconciliation and equal opportunities principles and practices;

* the provision of childcare services, directly or in partnership with other agencies, or through financial support to community services or to employees;

* a system of monitoring, evaluation and review.

It is important that employees who take up any of the options listed below are not penalised for doing so. They should not be employed on less favourable terms and conditions. Nor should they be considered by their fellow-workers and/or managers as less committed to their work and hence excluded from training and promotion opportunities.

At present, and in spite of changes in the attitudes of some men, the main responsibility for childcare remains with mothers. Family-friendly practices, where they exist, tend therefore to be utilised by mothers. This can and does lead to increased job segregation and a vicious circle in which certain jobs are perceived as suitable for flexible working and hence become "women's jobs"; or else the jobs which women traditionally undertake are the only ones which are considered for flexible arrangements, hence excluding men from access to those arrangements; or flexible working arrangements are seen as designed for women and therefore somehow inappropriate for men.

Attitudes to the role of the father in the family are changing, and both men and women would like to be able to find a better balance between home and working life. It is likely that the companies who make it possible for employees to reconcile work and family will attract a highly-motivated, high-quality workforce.

Introducing a comprehensive reconciliation programme may well mean a significant change to the life of an organisation. It is important, therefore, that everyone involved in or affected by it, also believes in it. All employees, not just those who are parents, need to know why the policy is being introduced and what its effects will be.

The Practices

Not all employees, not even all employees who are also working parents, form a homogeneous group. They will have different caring needs at different times of their and their children's lives, and at different stages in their own careers. Ideally, therefore, they need access to a range of options from which they and their employers can select the one which is most helpful to both parties.

This guide cannot give a detailed description of all the possible positive action measures which could be introduced into a workplace in order to answer the childcare needs of working parents. Moreover, many of these measures are part of providing good terms of employment for all employees, not just parents. The following list should be thought of as a menu from which to select, develop and implement those which are best suited to individual enterprises. However, it is important to make clear that all these practices have been successfully implemented in companies: that is, they are not a set of unreasonable demands by parents, but realistic, workable methods, of mutual benefit to employers and employees.

The most successful practices will be part of comprehensive reconciliation and/or equal opportunities policies.

1. Working time

Hours can be reduced by part-time working, by (temporarily) reduced working hours and by job-share. Part-time working has historically been an option taken up by women and characterised by low pay and low status. Job-share schemes are a more recent development and are less widely available, but generally carry better terms and conditions of employment than part-time work. It is not common yet for either option to be available at professional and managerial levels, although there is in practice little reason why this should be so.

EXAMPLE

In 1990, Drs Hilary Matthews and Elizabeth Thompson were jointly appointed to the post of consultant anaesthetist at the Mater Infirmorum Hospital in Belfast, Northern Ireland. They had already been job-sharing a more junior post at another hospital, but their new appointment made them the most senior job-sharers in the United Kingdom National Health Service.

Hours can be staggered by shift work or flexitime. These options can include a very wide range of possibilities - term-time working, weekly shifts, three or four day weeks, weekly/monthly/annual balancing of hours.

Family needs are often as unpredictable as they are unavoidable; a sudden illness or accident involving a child or a carer does not necessarily require a parent to be present the whole day but requires that workers are able to react quickly in emergencies. Flexibility within the agreed work schedule is the ideal approach in these situations.

2. Flexiplace

Many jobs, and their number is increasing, can be carried out in the home. The most successful systems seem to be those in which work done at home is combined with regular contacts with the parent workplace or a network of other home workers, to avoid too great a sense of isolation. Flexiplace arrangements can be combined with flexible hours to create an extremely creative response to reconciling work and family responsibilities.

3. Career breaks/sabbaticals

These are usually for longer periods than parental leave, and may not be tied so specifically to the care of very young children. At the same time, however, as statutory leave arrangements become more flexible and longer, the difference between these two sets of measures is becoming less clear-cut.

Rather than prescribing a single model of these longer-term breaks, employers when consulting with workers may discover that, again, flexibility is the answer. Career breaks are being offered which range from two to seven or more years, depending on the use to which the employee wants to put the break. It is important to keep good contacts with the employee in her/his absence, through skills updating sessions, regular short periods of work, information on developments in the organisation, and careful re-entry training.

4. Leave arrangements for employed parents

The importance of a range of leave arrangements available to all workers has already been discussed. Basic entitlements may be improved in specific workplaces through collective or company agreements. Companies can also play an important role in ensuring that workers are fully informed of their statutory entitlements and are supported when they choose to use them.

5. The provision of company childcare or support services

Working parents report that their concentration and productivity at work is better if they are confident that their children are in safe and high quality care. Some employers offer a variety of supportive measures, including:

* on-site childcare
* referral systems to community childcare
* company sponsorship of community childcare
* childcare vouchers
* children's holiday programmes
* after-school programmes
* company sponsorship of childcare training programmes
* transport to and from childcare facilities
* lunch services for children of employees

EXAMPLES[12]

Dragerwerk AG (Germany) - This company actively encourages both men and women to take up flexible working patterns, the better to reconcile their work and family lives. They offer staff a "menu" of 50 different working arrangements, in order to allow them to choose the working hours which suits their domestic needs best.

Hopital Saint-Camille (France) - This public organization has arranged for the provision of various services to its staff and their families - such as ironing, cleaning, and the preparation of take-away hot meals.

It is important to note the earlier discussion in the section on providing care for children. Services supported by companies should meet the criteria and conditions outlined in that section. Employers' support for services may best be developed within the dual frameworks of a general national or regional policy on services, based on a clear model of service development. A local service should not depend in the long term on individual companies and the labour force needs of individual employers: this will lead to inequalities for children and parents. Wherever possible, workplace or employer-paid childcare services should supplement, and not replace, publicly supported provision, offering wider choice to parents in the area.

SHARING PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Recommendation says that *"Member States should promote and encourage, with due respect for the freedom of the individual, increased participation by men"* (in the care and upbringing of children) **[Article 6]**. The Recommendation recognises that increased participation of men in the care and upbringing of children is essential for reconciling employment and caring responsibilities in a way that promotes gender equality. It will lead to more equal sharing of parental and other family responsibilities between women and men. It will contribute to the mainstreaming of reconciliation. It will ensure that other reconciliation measures promote gender equality. Without increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children, measures such as parental leave will be used mostly by women. This would confirm and reinforce employment inequalities as women, and not men, spend more time out of employment or working reduced hours.

Increased participation in the care and upbringing of children will require men to adopt new ways of working. At present, men typically work without a break throughout their adult lives, unless made unemployed. They work long hours in full-time jobs. This way of working presumes that men undertake few or no caring responsibilities; it is not compatible with equal sharing of family responsibilities. Unless this changes, women will continue to carry the greater share of family responsibilities - while having to emulate men's way of working if they wish to compete successfully in employment. For those women who cannot, or do not wish to, emulate men's way of working, the alternative will be to accept ways of working which

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12 These examples both come from companies which won their categories of the European Social Innovation Prize, awarded at Stockholm in May 1995. Further details of prizewinners are available from Unit V/E/1 of the European Commission, 200 Rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels.

do recognise family responsibilities (for example, job-sharing, part-time work), but which at present make it difficult or impossible to compete in the labour market with men.

Genuine equality between men and women requires not only more equal sharing in the home, but also that both men and women adopt new ways of working that recognise family responsibilities. The organisation of home-life and work-life are inextricably connected.

A reconciliation policy - adopted at government, social partner or individual workplace level - should *"make an explicit commitment to the importance of achieving a more equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women"* **[Parliament opinion]**

All other measures taken to promote reconciliation - provision of services, leave arrangements, workplace developments and any others should be *"compatible with this objective"* **[ibid.]** This is more likely to be achieved by:

* Developing closer relations between services and parents which in turn requires a commitment and action to involve fathers as well as mothers in services and to increase the number of men working with children in services[13];

* Structuring Leave arrangements in such a way that they positively encourage fathers to take leave, for example through the provision of paternity leave and of parental leave and leave for family reasons that is equally available to fathers and mothers; limited non-transferability; and where possible some compensation for lost earnings.

* Making Workplace measures equally available to men and women and structuring them in such a way that they positively encourage fathers as well as mothers to take advantage of them.

Clear political commitment and ensuring all reconciliation measures are compatible are both important. A broad and coherent strategy for promoting change might embrace the following objectives:

* Increasing public awareness and modifying public expectations about men's responsibility for children;

* Enabling men to appreciate the benefits to them, and others, of a greater participation in the care of their children and the development of closer relationships;

* Addressing the concerns of parents, childcare workers and the general public about men participating more in the care of children;

* Identifying and tackling obstacles and constraints - at individual, family, workplace and societal levels - that hinder and discourage increased participation by men, and developing effective ways of enabling individuals and organisations to change.

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13 Two publications by the EC Childcare Network cover this area: "Fathers, Nurseries and Childcare" and "Men as Workers in Childcare Services" - both available from the Commission (DGV/D/5).

The strategy emphasises the need to encourage and support change, and to remove constraints, thereby increasing the freedom of the individual. It does not coerce or pressurise men and women to adopt attitudes and behaviour that are not acceptable to them. It recognises that achieving change will be a complex and slow process, and that there are important resistances which need to be treated with sensitivity[14]

This involves exploring and evaluating the contribution of a variety of measures. As well as an explicit policy commitment and other, compatible, reconciliation measures, more specific measures have a role to play and may include

* work in schools, concerning parenthood, gender and childcare;

* work with prospective and actual parents (including programmes exclusively for fathers) in various settings (for example, the workplace, hospitals, health centres, nurseries and services for children);

* workplace programmes, involving employers and employees, to change the culture of work organisations, and to find effective ways of putting policies into practice and to deal with barriers to change;

* training for the social partners at national and regional level;

* media programmes and other methods of raising public awareness and modifying expectations.

Finally, an effective strategy needs to be based on careful monitoring and research into the most effective ways of bringing about change. The involvement of men and women in services, leave arrangements and workplace measures needs to be monitored and studied. Research needs to be undertaken in a variety of settings to understand better how and why change occurs and how the process of change can be best supported.

EXAMPLE

The regional government of Emilia-Romagna in Italy began its "Fatherhood Project" in 1992. The project has three parts :

First, research into fatherhood. The researchers from the Universities of Bologna and Parma interviewed individual fathers and groups of fathers and mothers. They asked them about fathers' role, identity and life experiences, the effect of the birth of their children, their involvement in the care of their children and in housework, their relationships with their partners and how they reconciled work and family life.

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[14] See report of "Ravenna Seminar on Men as Carers", produced by EC Childcare Network and available from the Commission (V/D/5).

Secondly, mothers and fathers of children attending childcare services in Emilia-Romagna have taken part in discussion groups which covered old and new models of maternity and paternity, how families are organised, how partners work together and gender identity.

Thirdly, several nurseries in Emilia-Romagna and a centre in Corby in the United Kingdom have come together to explore ways of increasing the part fathers play in childcare services and how centres can help fathers and mothers to think about gender roles and relationships. One objective of this initiative has been to identify strategies which could be applied throughout Europe, taking very different social, economic and cultural settings into account.

Chapter 4

Is it working? : Monitoring, evaluation and review

There is no need to spell out the case for an evaluation process; it is accepted that changes in practice have to be measured, and their outcome judged against pre-stated objectives. In the case of this guide this means monitoring and evaluating policies and practices to see if they in fact *"enable women and men to reconcile their occupational, family and upbringing responsibilities arising from the care of children"* (Recommendation Article 1).

Given that the guide makes suggestions for the achievement of this goal at many different levels, ranging from the individual service to governments, it would be impossible to prescribe exactly how to measure good practice at all these levels. However, it is important that Member States give full consideration to the overall levels and quality of provisions in place. This may be achieved by:

* monitoring of the factual situation in each country,
* evaluation of how far that situation answers the four central Articles of the Recommendation and the needs of the groups listed in Annex IV, and
* initiating review procedures, which will indicate where further improvements are necessary.

Co-ordination of statutory responsibilities

Reconciliation does not exist in isolation; it is an issue within equal opportunities, social policy, employment practices, education and training. At local, regional or national government level, it is important to co-ordinate the childcare aspects of all these policy areas. Monitoring can help in this co-ordination process by providing accurate information, and good co-ordination in turn can simplify the collection and analysis of information.

General themes

1. Equality

A theme which runs through the Recommendation is that of equal access to services, equality of opportunity for women in the workplace, equality for working parents, equal sharing of responsibility between mothers and fathers.

Monitoring, evaluation and review procedures should analyse and assess the equality aspect. Do all groups and individuals have equal access to the measures included in each article? Do measures apply equally to people irrespective of:

* gender
* income/social class
* ethnic origin
* marital status
* urban/rural location
* whether employees, self-employed or family workers
* level of seniority at the workplace
* working patterns, eg part- or full-time etc?

2. Standard information

It would obviously be desirable for information to be gathered in a standard form throughout the Community so that best practice can be identified and replicated. In the context of service provision, the Network on Childcare and other measures to Reconcile Work and Family life produced a report on the information currently available about services in the Member States. It includes recommendations on the type of information which is most useful, and how it can best be gathered[15].

3. Consultation

Parents and childcare workers should be consulted so that they can contribute their perspective, opinions and experience to the evaluation of services. Employers also have needs and views that can be most relevant to the evaluation process.

Children are the group most directly affected, but the least consulted. As soon as they are old enough to express a view, a real effort should be made to listen to them with respect.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

The four central Articles of the Recommendation describe the sorts of measures which will help working parents reconcile their working and parental responsibilities. The following sections list ways in which these measures can be monitored, evaluated and reviewed. These checklists are not comprehensive, but they indicate the sorts of questions that need to be asked at the different levels of responsibility. They should be considered alongside the relevant chapters of this guide, where the issues are dealt with in more detail. It is especially important to bring into the process the needs of each of the groups listed in Annex IV.

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15 EC Network on Childcare and other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Women (1993) **Monitoring Childcare Services for Young Children - A discussion Paper,** Brussels: European Commission.

1. Childcare services, Article 3 (see Chapter 2)

Goal
* to create accessible, flexible, appropriate childcare services in all areas of the Community

Monitor
* the need for services
* the demand (ie the expressed need; not necessarily the same as the actual need) for services
* the supply of services
* the range of services available
* childcare policies
* quality criteria/standards
* the needs of childcare workers (ie their training, terms and conditionsof employment, see also Article 5[2])
* reasons for non-take up of provisions

Evaluate
* how well or badly needs and demands are met by supply
* how effectively policies are implemented
* the quality of services measured against pre-set quality criteria
* progress towards targets

Review
* policies with a view to revising them if necessary
* action programmes to change services (eg type, quality, location) if necessary

2. Special leave, Article 4 (see Chapter 2)

Goal
* to help women and men through the provision of special leave *"properly to discharge their occupational, family and upbringing responsibilities"* (Recommendation Article 4). ("Special leave" is used in the checklist below to cover all four types of leave discussed in Chapter 3. Each type of leave will need to be monitored separately)

Monitor
* statutory provision of special leave
* non-statutory provision of special leave
* take-up of special leave by women
* take-up of special leave by men
* non-take-up of special leave by eligible women
* non-take-up of special leave by eligible men
* existence of programmes to encourage take-up

Evaluate
* is the amount of leave sufficient to achieve the goal?
* is the leave flexible enough to achieve the goal?
* is the take-up at a level which will achieve the goal?
* if not, why not?

Review: * in what way can provision and take-up be improved? (e.g. introduce and implement new provisions, revise and implement new ways of facilitating take-up.)

3. The Workplace

A. Environment, structure and organisation of work, Article 5 (see Chapter 2)

Goals: * "to create an environment, structure and organization of work which take into account the needs of all working parents with responsibility for the care and upbringing of children"

* to promote good practice

Monitor: * action taken to create such an environment eg surveys of employees' perceived needs, training of managers and supervisors, "family-friendly" policies (see Chapter 3 (iii))

Evaluate: * have any such actions been implemented?
* response to actions, take-up of "family-friendly" policies
* cost-benefit relationships.
* have the actions led to change? Have they been taken up by other employers?

Review: * would other actions be more successful? - design and implement.

B. Childcare workers, Article 5: 2 (see Chapter 2)

Goal: * to give proper recognition to childcare workers

Monitor: * training, salaries, terms and conditions to childcare workers
* turnover of staff
* job satisfaction

Evaluate: * any improvements in salaries, training courses, qualifications
* any reduction in numbers leaving childcare

Review: * improve recruitment and selection
* review salaries, terms and conditions.

4. Sharing of responsibilities, Article 6 (see Chapter 2)

Goal: * to achieve *"a more equal sharing of parental responsibilities between men and women"* (Recommendation, Article 6)

Monitor: * take-up by women and men of special leave
* take-up by women and men of other reconciliation policies

* patterns of employment between men and women
* evidence of policy commitment to the goal at all levels
* attitudes of women and men to the goal
* involvement of men in services for children, as fathers and as workers
division of parental responsibilities between men and women

Evaluate :
* whether there is division of parental responsibilities between women and men
* the extent to which policies and services support more equal sharing of responsibilities

Review :
* introduce and implement revised methods of changing attitudes and encouraging sharing.

ANNEXES

THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON CHILDCARE - 1992

II

(Acts whose publication is not obligatory)

COUNCIL

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION
of 31 March 1992
on child care

(92/241/EEC)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, and in particular Article 235 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission (1),

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament (2),

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee (3),

Whereas the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers, adopted in the Strasbourg European Council on 9 December 1989 by the Heads of State or Government of eleven Member States, lays down, in the third paragraph of point 16 in particular, that :

> 'Measures should also be developed to enable men and women to reconcile their occupational and family obligations' ;

Whereas the Commission action programme implementing the Community Charter provides for this Recommendation ;

Whereas in its Third Medium-Term Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1991-1995), the Commission identified the need for further action in this area ;

Whereas in its communication on family policies, sent to the Council on 24 August 1989, the Commission emphasized the importance of intensifying work relating to child care ;

Whereas child-care methods, parental leave and maternity leave from part of a whole which enables people to combine their family responsibilities and occupational ambitions ;

Whereas the Member States should take and/or encourage initiatives, taking into account the responsibilities of national, regional and local authorities, management and labour, other relevant organizations and private individuals, and/or in cooperation with the various parties concerned ;

Whereas the reconciliation of occupational, family and upbringing responsabilities arising from the care of children has to be viewed in a wide perspective which also takes into account the particular interests and needs of children at different age levels, where it is important, in order to achieve this, to encourage an overall policy aimed at enabling such reconciliation to occur ;

Whereas it is essential to promote the well-being of children and families, ensuring that their various needs are met and taking into account the fact that responsabilities arising from the care and upbringing of children continue up to and throughout the period of children's schooling, and especially when they are younger ;

Whereas in all Member States the demand for child-care services at prices affordable to parents exceeds the existing supply ;

Whereas inadequate provision of child-care services at prices affordable to parents and other initiatives to reconcile responsibility for the family and the upbringing of children with the employment, or with the education and training of parents in order to obtain employment constitutes a major barrier to women's access to and more effec-

(1) OJ No C 242, 17. 9. 1991, p. 3.
(2) OJ No C 326, 16. 12. 1991, p. 279.
(3) OJ No C 40, 17. 2. 1992, p. 88.

tive participation in the labour market, on equal terms with men, the effective participation of women in all areas of society and the effective use of their talents, skills and abilities in the current demographic situation ;

Whereas, moreover, in this area, disparities exist between Member States and between regions within Member States ;

Whereas, furthermore, better child-care services could facilitate freedom of movement of workers and mobility on the European labour market ;

Whereas child-care services may be public or private, individual or collective in form ;

Whereas child care is a broad concept which may involve the provision of child-care services which answer the needs of children, the grant of special leave to parents and the development of a working environment structure and organization which is adapted to the sharing between women and men of occupational, family and upbringing responsibilities arising from the care of children ;

Whereas in certain Member States, owing to the low level of national income and the need to impose strict limits on growth in public expenditure, the role of the public authorities may be subject to particular constraints ;

Whereas the standard clause included in the Community support frameworks for structural policy stipulates that the actions and measures taken within such a framework must conform with and, where appropriate, contribute to the implementation of Community policy and legislation relating to equality of opportunity between women and men, and that in particular, consideration must be given to training and infrastructure requirements which facilitate labour force participation by women with children ;

Whereas, furthermore, in the NOW Community initiative (1991-1993), financed by the Structural Funds, for the promotion of equal opportunities for women in the fields of employment and vocational training, additional child-care measures are provided for to assist women with children to have access to the labour market and to vocational training courses,

HEREBY RECOMMENDS AS FOLLOWS :

Article 1

Objective

It is recommended that Member States should take and/or progressively encourage initiatives to enable women and men to reconcile their occupational, family and upbringing responsibilities arising from the care of children.

Article 2

Areas of initiatives

For the purposes of Article 1, it is recommended that the Member States, taking into account the respective responsibilities of national, regional and local authorization, management and labour, other relevant organizations and private individuals, and/or in cooperation with national, regional or local authorities, management and labour, other relevant organizations and private individuals, should take and/or encourage initiatives in the following four areas :

1. The provision of children-care services while parents :

   — are working,

   — are following a course of education or training in order to obtain employment

   or

   — are seeking a job or a course of education or training in order to obtain employment.

   For the purposes of this Recommendation, 'child-care services' means any type of child care, whether public or private, individual or collective.

2. Special leave for employed parents with responsibility for the care and upbringing of children.

3. The environment, structure and organization of work, to make them responsive to the needs of workers with children.

4. The sharing of occupational, family and upbringing responsibilities arising from the care of children between women and men.

Article 3

Child-care services

As regards child-care services, it is recommended that the Member States, taking into account the respective responsabilities of national, regional and local authorities, management and labour, other relevant organizations and private individuals, and/or in cooperation with national, regional or local authorities, management and labour, other relevant organizations and private individuals, should take and/or encourage initiatives to :

1. enable parents who are working, following a course of education or training in order to obtain employment or are seeking employment or a course of education or training in order to obtain employment to have as much access as possible to local child-care services.

   In this context, endeavours should in particular be made to ensure that :

   — the services are offered at prices affordable to parents ;

   — they combine reliable care from the point of view of health and safety with a general upbringing and a pedagogical approach ;

— the needs of patents and children are taken into account when access to services is determined ;

— the services are available in all areas and regions of Member States, both in urban areas and in rural areas ;

— the services are accessible to children with special needs, for example linguistic needs, and to children in single-parent families, and meet the needs of such children ;

2. encourage flexibility and diversity of child-care services as part of a strategy to increase choice and meet the different preferences, needs and circumstances of children and their parents, while preserving coherence between different services ;

3. endeavour that the training, both initial and continuous, of workers in child-care services is appropriate to the importance and the social and educative value of their work ;

4. encourage child-care services to work closely with local communities through regular contact and exchanges of information, so as to be responsive to parental needs and particular local circumstances ;

5. encourage national, regional or local authorities, management and labour, other relevant organizations and private individuals, in accordance with their respective responsibilities, to make a financial contribution to the creation and/or operation of coherent child-care services which can be afforded by parents and which offer them a choice.

Article 4

Special leave

As regards special leave for employed parents with responsibility for the care and upbringing of children, it is recommended that Member States, taking into account the respective responsibilities of national, regional and local authorities, management and labour, other relevant organizations and private individuals, and/or in cooperation with national, regional or local authorities, management and labour, other relevant organizations and private individuals, should take and/or encourage initiatives, to take realistic account of women's increased participation in the labour force.

These initiatives should concern, for example, special leave enabling employed parents both men and women, who so desire properly to discharge their occupational, family and upbringing responsibilities, with, *inter alia* some flexibility as to how leave may be taken.

Article 5

Environment, structure and organization of work

As regards the environment, structure and organization of work, it is recommended that Member States, taking into account the respective responsibilities of national, regional and local authorities, management and labour, other relevant organizations and private individuals, and/or in cooperation with national, regional or local authorities, management and labour, other relevant authorities and private individuals, should take and/or encourage initiatives to :

1. support action, in particular within the framework of collective agreements, to create an environment, structure and organization of work which take into account the needs of all working parents with responsibility for the care and upbringing of children ;

2. ensure that due recognition is given to persons engaged in child-care services as regards the way in which they work and the social value of their work ;

3. promote action, especially in the public sector, which can serve as an example in developing initiatives in this area.

Article 6

Sharing of responsibilities

As regards responsibilities arising from the care and upbringing of children, it is recommended that Member States should promote and encourage, with due respect for freedom of the individual, increased participation by men, in order to a achieve a more equal sharing of parental responsibilities between men and women and to enable women to have a more effective role in the labour market.

Article 7

Commission report

The Member States shall inform the Commission, within three years of the date of the adoption of this Recommendation, of the measures taken to give effect to it, in order to enable the Commission to draw up a report on its implementation.

Done at Brussels, 31 March 1992.

For the Council

The President

Vitor MARTINS

ANNEX II

COMMISSION POLICY ON RECONCILIATION - RELATED LAW, STRUCTURAL FUNDS AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

RELATED LAW

The Recommendation on childcare should be taken in conjunction with another piece of Community law of great significance for women - the Directive[16] agreed in 1992 on health and safety for pregnant women and those who have recently given birth, which took effect from 19th October 1994. It also covers maternity leave and pay, and sets down measures on leave, rights at work, and protection from health hazards to both mother and child. Mothers get maternity pay at not less than the national rate of sick pay, and a minimum of 14 weeks' leave, of which 2 weeks can only be taken by the mother. A Directive is a law, which means it has to be incorporated into the legislation of each Member State.

Proposed legislation

The Commission made a proposal to the Council of Ministers in 1983 for a Directive on parental leave and leave for family reasons. The proposed Directive was not adopted, and the Commission therefore decided to pursue an agreement with the Social Partners using the procedure provided for by the Social Protocol of the Treaty on European Union. Using this procedure, the Social Partners concluded a framework agreement on Parental Leave on 14th December 1995. At the same time they forwarded the agreement to the Commission, asking for it to be implemented by a Council decision on a proposal from the Commission. Pursuant to article 4.2 of the Agreement on Social Policy, the Commission submitted to the Council, on 31 January 1996, a proposal for a Directive aiming at implementing the framework agreement in the European Union (except the UK). The Directive was approved by the Council on 29 March 1996.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS REGARDING FAMILY POLICIES

The Council Conclusions[17] of 1989 emphasised the inter-relationship of families, the labour market and equal opportunities between women and men. The Conclusions include an undertaking to include "the family dimension" in appropriate Community policies, including equal opportunities policies.

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16 92/85/EEC; OJ L 348 28.11.92.

17 89/C277/02; OJ C 277/2 31.10.92.

STRUCTURAL FUNDS AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

The Structural Funds, whose objective is to increase economic and social cohesion make up about one third of the total Community budget. The revised regulations governing the different Funds came into effect in January 1994. Equal opportunities issues are clearly highlighted in the new regulations, and this in turn should lead to better opportunities for childcare initiatives and projects.

'NOW' initiative

The Community's New Opportunities for Women (NOW) initiative (1991-1993)[18] was launched to promote equal opportunities in vocational training and enterprise creation by offering courses tailor-made for women. It decided from the outset that it had to build childcare into the programme to make sure that women with children could take advantage of NOW schemes, and that childcare workers could receive training under NOW. Many innovative and effective childcare projects were funded by the NOW programme. The "new" NOW programme, "EMPLOYMENT-NOW" (1994-97), part of an integrated initiative on employment and development of human resources, builds on the success of the earlier programme. Its goal is still to support projects which will promote equal opportunities. Especial emphasis is being laid on the transnational element, on innovation and on a "bottom-up" approach in which local communities will play a full part in the programme.

Observatory on Family Policy

An interdisciplinary team of experts monitors developments in family policy in analysing the differences and similarities between the fifteen Member States. It produces an annual report.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Childcare Network

A Community-wide network of experts on childcare and other issues relevant to combining paid work and caring for children was set up by the Commission and was in operation between 1986-96. Its full title was changed in 1991 to the Network on childcare and other measures to reconcile employment and family responsibilities. Its role under the Commission's Third Action Programme on Equal Opportunities was to monitor developments, collect and disseminate information, review policy options and generally provide support to the Commission. Its extensive research covered three important areas mentioned in the Recommendation on Childcare: the nature and quality of Services available to children across Europe; the Leave Arrangements available in Member States; and the role of Men in Caring for children. Reports of this research are freely available from the European Commission.

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18 OJ C327, 29 December 1990.

Further research for the Commission in the field of Reconciling Work and Family Life, within the framework of the Commission's Fourth Action Programme on Equal Opportunities, will take the form of integrated equality projects, and will handled by the new ANIMA[19] structure.

Families and Work Network

In 1994 the Commission founded the "Families and Work" Network, whose remit includes consideration of the fourth area of importance recognised by the Childcare Recommendation, namely the policies and practices which employers can pursue within the workplace to encourage better reconciliation of work and family life. This Network is also chiefly responsible for the award of the European Prize for Social Innovation which is given to companies which demonstrate innovative measures to help their staff combine both occupational and domestic roles. The Network will run initially until 1998. Further information on its work can be obtained from the Commission.

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[19] Address for Technical assistance office: ANIMA, Rue de Spa 61, B-1000 Brussels

ANNEX III

GLOSSARY OF KEY CONCEPTS

'Family responsibilities'

This term covers a wide range of responsibilities that arise from family life and relationships: responsibilities for the care and well-being of children, partners, parents and other relatives; and responsibilities for shopping, cooking, cleaning and other household tasks. Everyone is likely to have some family responsibilities, whether they live alone or with others and whether they have children or not.

'Childcare'

This Guide is concerned with caring responsibilities for children. In this context, childcare is used to mean "the care and upbringing of children". It is a "broad concept" [**Recommendation**]. It means 'caring' for children in its broadest sense - *"ensuring that the various needs (of children) are met"* [**Recommendation**] to assure their well-being, health and development. Caring responsibilities for children are not confined to early childhood: they *"continue up to and throughout the period of children's schooling"* [**Recommendation**].

Parents usually have the main responsibility for childcare. A wide range of childcare measures is required, specifically to reconcile parents' employment and childcare, and more generally to support parents, whether or not they are employed: these measures are discussed below. "Parents" in the context of this guide should be taken to include step-parents, adoptive parents and legal guardians.

'Sharing family responsibilities'

Reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities, so as to promote gender equality, requires equitable sharing of these responsibilities between women and men. Women have shouldered a disproportionate and unreasonable share of the responsibility, and this has played a large part in the creation and maintenance of women's unequal position in the labour market.

Equitable sharing of family responsibilities has implications for society (in particular governments), social partners and other social organisations. It also requires men to take a more equal share of family responsibilities; indeed it assumes that men have equal responsibility for children and their care and upbringing. Childcare and other family responsibilities, and achieving reconciliation between employment and family responsibilities, therefore, are issues for men as well as women.

This has important implications for men's employment. Men typically work without a break throughout their adult lives, unless they are made unemployed, and in full-time jobs where

theywork on average 40-50 hours a week[20]. This way of working is not compatible with equal sharing of family responsibilities.

'Partnership'

Reconciliation of employment and caring for children (and other family responsibilities) requires the active commitment and participation of a number of partners: mothers and fathers; employers and trade unions; public and private organisations; and government at local, regional and national levels. Effective partnership needs the involvement of all of these partners; recognition by all partners of their interest in and responsibility for reconciliation; and fair allocation between partners of the work and costs involved in caring.

'The value and cost of caring'

Caring work, whether paid or unpaid, is generally devalued in European societies: it is taken for granted, has low status and, when done as a job, has poor pay and conditions[21]. Reconciliation must be based on a recognition that caring work **is** work, and moreover demanding and skilled work; caring work is valuable; and caring work always costs money, whether done on a paid or unpaid basis (when undertaken on an unpaid basis, the costs are usually borne by the carer through foregone earnings).

'Mainstreaming reconciliation'

Childcare is not a short-term problem, affecting only women when they have young children. It is one of a number of family responsibilities that most people - men and women - have for much or most of their lives. Employment and other areas of public life need to adapt in fundamental ways to recognise this reality. Reconciliation is not an optional issue: like equality, it needs to be mainstreamed into employment and all other aspects of public life. Mainstreaming means integrating reconciliation into the formulation, implementation and evaluation of all policies, programmes, practices and procedures.

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20 See EC Network on Childcare and other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities for Men and Women (1993) **Mothers, Fathers and Employment 1985-91,** Brussels: European Commission.

21 EC Network on Childcare and other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities for Men and Women (1988) **Childcare Workers with Children Under 4,** Brussels: European Commission.

ANNEX IV

FRAMEWORK FOR RECONCILIATION: WHO BENEFITS?

This table indicates the benefits that effective reconciliation policy can bring to various groups within society. It should be noted that the groups included are not homogenous.

Women

* promote equality of opportunity in employment, training, education, decision-making and other areas of public activity.
* improve economic position.
* reduce stress.
* improve health, well-being, and quality of working, family and social life.
* increase choice in combining employment and family responsibilities.

Men

* promote closer relationships with their children.
* develop skills for undertaking 'family responsibilities.'
* reduce stress.
* improve health, well-being, and quality of working, family and social life.
* increase choice in combining employment and family responsibilities.

Children

* protect against physical or psychological harm or neglect.
* promote physical, intellectual, social, cultural and moral development.
* improve quality of family life.
* improve and broaden the range of social relationships, activities and experiences available to them.
* ensure continuity of care, relationships and experience.
* ensure parental care and attention when the child needs them.

Families

* improve family income, reduce poverty and financial stress.
* improve family functioning and relationships.
* more equal sharing of family responsibilities.
* improve access to community and self-help groups and networks.

Employers

* enhance public image and compete for staff
* improve staff retention, reduce recruitment costs and ensure adequate return on investment in training and career development
* reduce absenteeism and turnover
* improve staff morale and motivation
* provide better service for clients
* create a workforce more able to respond to change
* ensure overall better use of human resources

Local community

* enable employed parents and their children to participate fully in their local communities
* support creation and maintenance of community and self-help groups and networks

Society

* increase understanding of and value attached to caring work
* improve economic performance
* increase social cohesion
* improve social fabric
* make best use of human resources
* ensure appropriate, socially healthy and economically optimal balance between family responsibilities, employment and other activities

European Commission

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